

82ND HOUSE DISTRICT

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COUNTIES, AND ALSO THE NORTHWEST
CORNER OF AUGLAIZE COUNTY

Committees

Higher Education and Workforce
Development; Ways and Means;
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State Representative Craig S. Riedel
Ohio House of Representatives

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Rezabek, Ranking Member Celebrezze, and the Members of the Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for letting me speak to the importance of House Bill 215. This legislation would allow the part time Paulding County County Court to become the full time Paulding County Municipal Court.

The sixth amendment to the United States Constitution states, "In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed...". These rights are currently being denied to the citizens of Paulding County. The Paulding County County Court is a part-time operation meeting only three times a week. This has created a backlog of court hearings stretching weeks and sometimes months. The Court hears criminal division, traffic division, and civil division cases, including misdemeanor criminal cases, complaints up to \$15,000, small claims up to \$6,000, and eviction cases. With the increasing number of cases the court is responsible to try, there are many factors that are contributing to this backlog.

In 2012 United State Route 24 was expanded from a two lane highway into a four lane highway. This has increased the flow of traffic through Paulding County. More law enforcement has been placed along this road and the Paulding County County Court has seen a substantial increase of tickets, accidents, and moving violations.

Judge Suzanne Rister, the residing judge over the Paulding County County Court, has also stated that jury trials are a key component to the increase of cases on the Court's docket. Currently there is only one-day set aside for jury trials. Sentencing, pre-trial meetings, and traffic division cases take up the remaining two days and are required for the Court to continue to function.

These factors along with many others, such as the increasing cases regarding the opioid epidemic, have created an injustice to the people of Paulding County. By passing House Bill 215 and creating the Paulding County Municipal Court we can address this negligence and better serve the people of Paulding County. Paulding's County Commissioners are in full support of this legislation. I believe that the courts are an integral part of our society and should have all the tools necessary to deliver fair and swift justice. This is why I am asking the committee to support House Bill 215. Thank you for letting me address you today. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.